

*The*  
MAJLIS





A place where customs and traditions  
are maintained and passed on from  
generation to generation

**T**he Majlis is a place for gathering, exchanging stories and entering into debates, discussions and friendly lively chat. It is a place where people pass on customs and traditions to their children, learn news of different cultures, talk about world affairs, find out about the welfare of one another and those in the community, and is considered a must have part of any home in the gulf region.

Within Qatar especially, it is known that the Majlis maintains the customs and traditions of this country, where the rules and etiquettes of hospitality, love and respect are passed on from generation to generation. No boy can enter the traditions of The Majlis without knowing that complete respect to those who are elder is paramount, and that there is a decorum and protocol to every visit, whether within the family or outside.







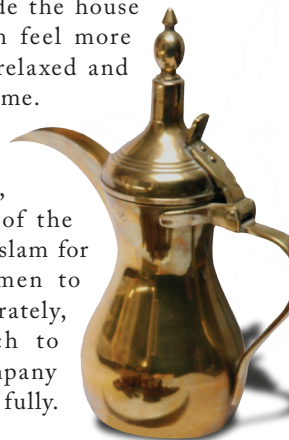
These very traditions have an important role in the upbringing of children, for children who love one another, understand respect, tolerance and the rights of others become good men in the future, men that their country can be proud of.

### **The Majlis:**

Usually, the male Majlis is placed outside of the house, so that men may enter it at

any time of the day, without disturbing the privacy of the house. Therefore its door will be open directly to the outside, hardly ever locked. In complete contrast, the female Majlis is inside the house to make them feel more comfortable, relaxed and part of the home.

You will never find a mixed Majlis, for it is part of the traditions of Islam for men and women to socialise separately, allowing each to enjoy the company of their friends fully.



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A Majlis is a place for hosting guests, be they from within the family, friends or just passers by. The people of Qatar learned about caring for their guests from the values of Islam, a clear example of which can be seen in the saying of Prophet Muhammad

*“Let him who believes in Allah and the last day either speak good or keep silent, and let him who believes in Allah and the last day be generous to his neighbour, and let him who believes in Allah and the last day be generous to his guest”.*

It is recommended to welcome the guest with a smile and expressing joy as told by Prophet Muhammad

*“Your smiling at your brother is an act of charity”*

Also you will find people open hearted, welcoming people who arrive unexpectedly, or arrive uninvited, for the deep belief in the blessings of taking food as a community, for Prophet Muhammad said:

*“He who has enough food for two, let him invite a third, and he who has food for four, let him invite a fifth or a sixth.”*

## Traditions:

Within a typical Majlis you will find a traditionally decorated room, with seating using either the time-honored sadu that has been part of Qatar’s history, or now more often a contemporary design. This seating can either be soft and long upon the floor, or more



The host will remain standing, until he is sure that all of his guests have had enough coffee



modern sofa type seats. Either way, you will find misnads (cushions) to rest against, the takiyya (squared cushions) to rest arms on, the dallah (coffee pot), dates, and medkhan (a pot where scented wood is burned).

The host will always start by welcoming his guest by offering coffee and dates to the eldest guest, then to the one at his right, then the next to his right until the last guest. The host will then remain standing, and will not sit until he is sure that all his guests have had enough coffee. The same steps may then be taken with tea or camel milk. It is not from the customs to ask whether or not coffee will be drunk, nor will many refuse.



In the olden days, drinking of coffee was a symbol of protection, where once consumed, the host would guarantee your peace and safety while in his care.

After serving drinks comes the time for alfowala (refreshment), which consist of nuts, fruits and sweets, along with tea and coffee.

## The Meal:

After alfowala arrives the main meal, which usually consists of lamb or camel, served

with rice and a drink of laban to accompany the meal. The host must not be extravagant in the food he is serving, yet will not spare his guest of what he has and what he can offer his guest, as told by Prophet Muhammad

*“Eat, drink, and give charity without extravagance and showing off”*

It is also recommended that the host serves the food as soon as possible and not to ask his guest whether he wishes to eat or not, for out of politeness a guest may refuse even though he is hungry.

“Then comes the time for alfowala, which consist of nuts, fruits and sweets, along with tea and coffee.



Meals traditionally would be taken upon the floor, with a central tray upon which the main meal is served. All would gather around the single tray, and share from this, remembering God quietly to themselves before the meal began. All would then start to eat with their right hand only, with the host ensuring that each guest had taken enough rice and meat. It is also a tradition to eat from that part of the tray in front of you, without taking from food in front of other people. This is yet another custom that links directly back to Prophet Muhammad, for he once said to a young man taking a meal with him:

“Young man, mention Allah, eat with your right hand and eat from that which is closest to you.”

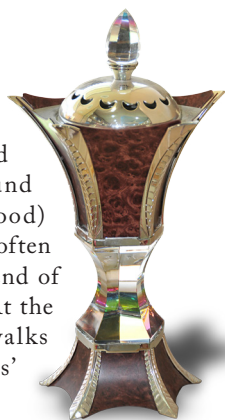


The host should continue to eat while the guest does, for if he stops it may embarrass the guest and causes him to leave his food even if he wanted more. Once any guest has completed his meal, he will supplicate for the host, by saying:

*"O Allah, bless for them that which you have provided for them, forgive them and have mercy on them"*

## Finally:

After the meal it is preferred that the host brings the Medkhan and refreshes the air around with Oud (scented wood) and rose water. This is often the sign that the end of the night has arrived. At the end of visit the host walks his guest to the Majlis' door to say his farewell.



Notes :

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